

# CHAPTER 1

## WELCOME TO THE SPORT

Welcome to the sport of Smallbore Target Rifle Shooting.

Welcome to a sport that can be enjoyed by everybody - *almost* everybody that is, because a serious criminal record would make life difficult for you (although minor infringements of the law certainly won't disbar you).

The only physical restraints are that you really need to be strong enough to hold a rifle up; however, that pretty well covers everybody over the age of twelve (and some youngsters below that age have managed).

There's no disadvantage in being tall, short, fat or slim, and both disabled and able-bodied people enjoy the sport equally as well.

The only qualification you really *do* need is a desire to do something different and exciting.

The top end of the sport is extremely competitive, but at other levels the majority of people shoot simply because they enjoy the challenge, the camaraderie and the socialising.

The sport is what you make it. If you're determined to compete in the Olympic Games, then here's a sport where you can. If you're content to take part without the need to compete, target rifle shooting will accommodate you as well.

There are no age restrictions: you can start as early as you like and finish as late as you like. Many people continue shooting in their eighties - there aren't many sports where you can compete with people a quarter of that age on an equal basis without being at a disadvantage.

There are clubs scattered all over the country - and indeed the world - so no matter where you live, there will almost certainly be a rifle club within a reasonable travelling distance.

A number of the more enlightened schools teach rifle shooting and there are many inter-school competitions.

The sport needn't be expensive; in fact, investing in secondhand equipment can get you started with a very modest outlay. Most clubs will loan out equipment free of charge, so the initial expenses are for club membership, range fees and consumables (i.e. targets and ammunition).

It is without a doubt the safest sport you could possibly consider taking up - a rifle range is the safest place in the world. There are fewer accidents in rifle shooting than any other sport (and that includes ballroom dancing and tiddlywinks!).

The challenge in the sport is in acquiring the skill to send a bullet down a range consistently and accurately, and that's the sort of skill used and admired in many other sports like bowling, archery, darts, curling, golf, boules, etc. etc.

The sport has been refined over the years and has now reached a degree of accuracy that would astound the rifle shooters of old, but the equipment used has also become more refined. Nowadays it's a very sophisticated, technical sport, but it still relies on the skill of the shooter.

You may never have heard of the sport, you may never have visited a range, but there will almost certainly be somebody amongst your acquaintances who has, or who knows somebody who has.

At one time every town in the country would have had at least one smallbore target rifle range, and all sorts of people would have used it. Sadly, a lot of ranges have now disappeared, but the sport is still alive and well.

The next time the Olympic Games are on the television, you'll see people from all over the world competing at Smallbore Target Rifle Shooting.

Why don't you join them!